

VZCZCXRO8755
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHKM #0413/01 0790348
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 190348Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0140
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHKE/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0976
RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000413

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: SNAPSHOT OF LOCAL PERCEPTIONS ON OIL FINDS IN UGANDA

REF: A)KAMPALA 393, B)KAMPALA 24

¶1. SUMMARY: Ambassador Browning and Command Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) Rear Admiral Greene met with western Ugandan politicians to discuss the effects of continued oil exploration in the area. The local leaders expressed a variety of needs, from clean water to education, most of which they expected Tullow Oil, the exploration company in this area, to provide. A district politician countered fears that the inhabitants of the region would be forced from the land as oil production commenced in 2009, and reminded local leaders that the Government of Uganda (GOU) would be responsible for implementing reforms in the area. END SUMMARY.

¶2. The meeting took place with the District Chairperson (LC5), eight village-level Local Councils (LCIs), and their deputies, representing the five fishing villages spread along the upper two-thirds of Lake Albert. Until Tullow built access roads into the area, a nearly impassable escarpment separated the inhabitants from the rest of Uganda. The local leaders explained that people from these villages were more likely to travel 50 miles across Lake Albert to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) than they were to go to Hoima, the nearest Ugandan town, about the same distance away. The area contains the Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve, Uganda's newest protected area, which the proprietors of the Lake Albert Safari Lodge maintain through a concession from the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). The population of the five villages is approximately 45,000 and has, by unofficial accounts, grown considerably since Tullow's arrival.

¶3. Several of the local leaders noted that regardless of their fears and complaints, the oil finds exposed the communities for the first time to politicians, military officials, private sector representatives, and members of the diplomatic community. Henry Irumba, the local leader from Kaiso village, called oil the "light at the end of a dark tunnel" because for the first time the inhabitants had roads, access to health services, and better education opportunities. Also, he said, as a result of the exposure, the villagers believed that they were lagging in terms of health and education compared to the rest of Uganda.

¶4. The local leaders feared that the Government, in cooperation with the oil companies, would eventually "force the people off their land." Following the meeting, Econoff asked the Community Liaison Officer at the Lake Albert Safari Lodge, Richard Angubo, to explain this fear. Angubo pointed to a group of Ugandan military soldiers and said that they were all buying land, in anticipation that it would be more valuable in the future. Also, Angubo explained that the inhabitants had noticed an increased presence of politicians, arriving from Kampala, and presumably, purchasing land. (Note: Land is a highly sensitive issue in Uganda, where most people hold long-term leases from the landowners. Thousands of duplicate land-titles exist in Uganda, due to incompetence and corruption at the Land Registry. End note.) The District Chairperson countered firmly fears that local communities would be forced from their land, either by the Ugandan Government or the private oil companies.

¶5. The local leaders complained that the area lacked clean water sources. Olama Gilbert, the Local Council Chairman from Sebagoro, a fishing village adjacent to Tullow's main camp site, said that "they give us de-worming medicine, but do not give us water without worms." The inhabitants drink the water from Lake Albert, which is polluted by a number of sources including livestock that bathe in the lake, discharging fecal matter and tsetse fly insecticide. Angubo estimated that there were already more than two million cattle feeding and bathing in a relatively small area trapped between the lake and the escarpment. While the Lake Albert Safari Lodge proprietors had worked with the GOU to have much of the livestock removed from the protected area when it was created, Angubo said that people were moving again into the wildlife reserve to gather natural resources, graze livestock, and settle, as in the case of Kaiso village.

¶6. Fishing and other natural resources are being taxed by greater local demand and in-migration. The opportunity to ship fish to larger towns on the new roads has raised the price of the communities' local staple food, tilapia, considerably. Trucks that delivered goods to Tullow were returning with fish to Hoima and Kampala, where it would capture a higher price than in the local villages. The Local Chairmen reported that people had started fishing in areas formally used for harvesting young fish, and catching the fish with their mosquito nets.

¶7. Comment: Local expectations for development in the area are very high, and will increase as oil production begins at the end of 2009. Rumors abound, including that Tullow Oil is secretly exporting oil, and that the locals will be forced from their land. Post will continue to work on outreach through the PRIME/West project, a small private-public partnership, which encourages environmental protection and increases economic opportunities around the Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve. Also, Post will work through USAID's

KAMPALA 00000413 002 OF 002

Linkages program to develop more contact between parliamentarians and their constituents to handle the rumors circulating in the area.

BROWNING